



Corporate Parenting Committee
30 October 2018

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Children and Young People's
Services**

**Enrichment activities for older Looked After Children and
Care Leavers - Summer 2018**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision: (only applicable for Cabinet, Cabinet Sub Committee and officer decisions)	For information
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To inform the Corporate Parenting Committee about enrichment activities provided for Looked After Children and care leavers between June 2018 and September 2018.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Isolation and loneliness stand as one of the major challenges experienced by older children in care and care leavers as they move into their own tenancies at a young age, struggle with taking on household responsibilities and often feel different from their peer group who do not face the same kind of issues.

2.2. Many of Brent's care leavers have not regularly met care experienced young people or been involved in leisure activities outside of their

school/college/employment environment. Brent's leaving care teams have a programme of independence workshops for care leavers that help in tackling isolation as well as assisting care leavers to be equipped with independent living skills. These workshops include tenancy management, money management and healthy relationships. From autumn 2018, more workshops will be offered on sexual health, physical health and substance misuse. However, as Corporate Parents, the Local Authority can do more to help care leavers and older Looked After Children, hence, an enrichment programme was designed to combat isolation and to build confidence and self-esteem.

2.3. The enrichment programme includes one-off activities as well as regular structured activities.

2.4. **One off activities**

Milly Day

- June 26th was 'Milly Day'. These are sponsored event days at a riverside property on the banks of the Thames in Buckinghamshire. The centre offers opportunities for those living with difficulties day in and day out, a chance to recharge (<http://millydays.org.uk/milly-days/>). 30 young people from Brent travelled on a coach to Buckinghamshire to spend the day at 'Milly's' country house. None of these care leavers had previously met but within a few hours many were taking part in a table-tennis tournament, playing football together, learning to drive a boat up and down the Thames and swimming.
- Some care leavers formed friendships with those care leavers they discovered lived nearby. In addition, it was an opportunity for many to experience activities out of their comfort zone – in an unfamiliar environment.

Tall Ships

- During a week in July, 10 of our Looked After Children and care leavers joined a Tall Ships voyage from Dorset along the English Channel and around the Isle of Wight. Young people were responsible for planning the navigation, cooking all the food and learning to sail the ship. Some took the challenge to climb the crow's nest and all of them bonded well during the week. Feedback from young people was very positive. Below is one example:

The Tall Ship, was an amazing experience that allowed us as young people to venture out in the wilderness and learn the life at sea. This provided us with the opportunity to see different parts of England that we may have never got the opportunity to do so"

2.5 Regular activities

Jamie's Farm

- Jamie's Farm welcomed 10 Looked After Children aged 14 – 16 for a week in the summer. This was a working farm in Monmouth, Wales, offering residential activities that aim to build the resilience and self-esteem of participants. Brent's children worked hard on the farm, taking on the challenges they faced – feeding and mucking out the animals, sheep handling, horticulture, farm maintenance, mountain climbing, and cooking. Perhaps the biggest challenge was the digital detox – as all participants had to agree to a “no phones” policy for the 4 days they were at the farm. This in itself gave the young people an opportunity to reflect on their life back in London, and consider life choices going forwards. One young person summed up the experience:

“I learnt that if you put your mind to something, you can achieve it no matter how hard you think it is and that team work makes the dream work”

- The next trip to Jamie's Farm is organised to take place during half term in October 2018.

Care Leavers' Hub

- The Hub is a youth club space for care leavers to meet each other on a more regular basis, to be involved in deciding which activities they want to participate in and to continue to build relationships and networks that will last, when professionals are no longer a part of their lives. The quote below shows that young people were keen to attend more regular activities

'I would come if it was every fortnight' 'That's funny, I was going to say every fortnight but I thought you guys would say that was too much.'

- The Hub started on 29th August 2018 at the Learning Zone, Wembley Stadium. 18 young people turned up for the first event where they enjoyed team games, board games and a chance to chat, listen to music and eat pizza.
- The feedback was very positive. Six of the young people from the Tall Ships trip attended and had the opportunity to see each other for the first time since the trip. Half the group were made up of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Young People and the atmosphere was inclusive and upbeat.

“We don't get to see each other, we only get to see each other twice a year”

- Plans continue for monthly hub sessions, including a regular movie night, the first of which took place in September, bowling in October for National Care Leavers week and a Christmas event.

Football Club

- Weekly football began on 3rd September 2018 using the artificial pitches in Wembley Park. 14 Care Leavers participated in football facilitated by two Personal Advisers (PAs). Many young people attended who had never engaged with Care Leavers' workshops previously.
- Some of the young people now arrange to meet their PAs an hour prior to football for practical help in areas including budgeting, within an informal group setting.

WhatsApp Group

- A Care Leavers' WhatsApp group has now been set up. All Care Leavers must consent before being added to the group. There are currently 19 participants and it is growing daily. The group is used specifically to inform young people about these enrichment activities and consult with young people for feedback and views to improve ongoing events.
- The interaction has been very positive: Below is an example of interaction between young people:

"was good last night, are we going cinema next month?" 'I'm down for that' 'that's a good idea' 'yeah I'll come' 'can you share the photo from yesterday?'

2.6 Upcoming events/activities

National Care Leavers' Week – 24th-31st October

- The Looked After Children and Permanency (LACP) Service proposes to display posters within the Civic Centre, showcasing examples of the young people Children and Young People's Services are proud of. Example text on a poster: *Meet A..., she is 20, she grew up in foster care and now she's at University studying to become a pilot. She's one of our 300 care leavers whose achievements we're celebrating during National Care Leavers' Week. Young people in and leaving the care system face many challenges and we need to make sure their achievements are recognised. Share our pride #celebratingbrentcareleavers.* The final version of these posters will be agreed with the Operational Director.
- The LACP Service proposes to organise a football match between care leavers and senior Brent officers.

2.7 Future thoughts:

- Consideration is being given to creating a group for our care leaver young parents and parents-to-be to meet.
- Separately a group for female care leavers is also being planned with our young people.
- Development activity is in progress to enable Care Leavers in Action to carry out their activities within the Hub in order to help improve general feedback on services and to make sure activity is focused and arranged efficiently.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The costs of the summer activities for children in and leaving care were met through the Virtual School and some charitable grants. At present, work is being undertaken to apply for grants in order to sustain the current level of enrichment activities.

Report sign off:

GAIL TOLLEY

Strategic Director, Children and Young People